DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 355 627 EA 024 726

TITLE	Essential Components of a Successful Education System: The Business Roundtable Education Public Policy Agenda.
INSTITUTION	Business Roundtable, New York, NY.
PUB DATE	89
NOTE	11p.; For a related document, see EA 024 727.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; *Educational Assessment; *Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; *Evaluation Criteria; Preschool Education; Public Schools; School Business Relationship; *School Effectiveness; *Staff Development; Teacher Participation

ABSTRACT

America's ability to compete, its democratic system, and the future of its children depend upon all children achieving educational success. The Business Roundtable (BRT), representing some 200 corporations, believes that systemic changes are needed to realize essential educational goals. The new educational system advocated by BRT is committed to four operating assumptions: (1) all students can achieve superior academic achievement; (2) knowledge currently exists to teach successfully; (3) high expectations must be reflected in the curriculum for all students, even while instructional time and strategies may vary; and (4) each child requires an advocate. Other necessary components of a new educational system include: (1) performance-based criteria; (2) assessment strategies as strong as the educational outcomes; (3) rewards for schools that succeed, penalties for schools that fail, and incentives for schools to improve; (4) the participation of school staff in making instructional decisions; (5) major emphasis on staff development; (6) high-quality pre-kindergarten programs, especially for disadvantaged students; (7) health and social services sufficient to reduce significant barriers to learning; and (8) technologies that enhance teacher and student productivity and access to learning. (TEJ)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

EA

The Business Roundtable

ED355627

Essential Components of a Successful Education System

The Business Roundtable Education Public Policy Agenda

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

N. Hutt

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 024 726

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Introduction

Our nation's public kindergarten through 12th grade education system is in crisis – over one fifth of our students fail to graduate from high school and those who do often lack the skills to succeed.

To ensure our country remains competitive with the rest of the world and to protect our way of life, we must better educate our children. The BRT CEOs are committed to this cause and have embraced a K-12 Education Initiative, a ten-year commitment to support school restructuring at the state and national levels. They are working with state policymakers, educators, business leaders, parents, and private citizens in all 50 states and the District of Columbia to promote systemic change in our schools.

This booklet outlines the BRT agenda on education and describes nine essential components of a successful school system on which it is based. To succeed, the BRT believes all nine components must be addressed.

The BRT's efforts will help students and help America achieve the national education goals which the President and the nation's Governors have announced.

Executive Summary

Essential Components of a Successful Education System

America's ability to compete, our democratic system and the future of our children depend upon all our children being educationally successful.

The Business Roundtable, representing some 200 corporations, supports the national education goals developed by President Bush and the nation's Governors. The achievement of those goals is vital to the nation's well-being.

These are the essential components, or characteristics, that the Roundtable believes are needed to provoke the degree of systemic change that will achieve the national goals through successful schools:

1. The new system is committed to four operating assumptions:
   - All students can learn at significantly higher levels
   - We know how to teach all students successfully
   - Curriculum content must reflect high expectations for all students, but instructional time and strategies may vary to assure success
   - Every child must have an advocate

2. The new system is performance or outcome based.

3. Assessment strategies must be as strong and rich as the outcomes.

4. Schools should receive rewards for success, assistance to improve and penalties for failure.

5. School-based staff have a major role in making instructional decisions.

6. Major emphasis is placed on staff development.

7. A high-quality pre-kindergarten program is established, at least for all disadvantaged students.

8. Health and other social services are sufficient to reduce significant barriers to learning.

9. Technology is used to raise student and teacher productivity and to expand access to learning.

Essential Components of a Successful Education System

The Business Roundtable Education Public Policy Agenda

America's ability to compete, our democratic system and the future of our children depend upon all our children being educationally successful.

In the fall of 1989, The Business Roundtable accepted President Bush's challenge to help produce systemic change in the way teaching and learning are practiced in the nation's elementary and secondary schools. Chief executive officers of Roundtable member companies have made a 10-year commitment of personal time and company resources to this effort. We have been learning more about the issues, generating additional and deeper commitment on many fronts, and working with the President, the Governors, and other interested parties in the formulation of the announced national education goals.

We support the goals. Their achievement is vital to the nation's well-being. Now it is time to begin implementation – state-by-state – recognizing that no single improvement will bring about the systemic change that is needed. The effort requires a comprehensive approach that utilizes the knowledge and resources of broadly based partnerships in each state.

The next step is to agree on action plans for a public policy agenda that defines the characteristics of a successful school system. This paper identifies those essential system components, which we see as the requirements for provoking the degree of change necessary for achieving the national goals through successful schools.

Individual Roundtable CEOs and the Governors have teamed up to institute these components in state policy. The action plan for each state will be measured against how the plan contributes to or detracts from these essential components. The nine components should be considered as a comprehensive and integrated whole. While their implementation should be strategically phased in, if any one is left unattended, the chances of overall success will be sharply reduced.

If, however, every state aggressively creates a school system reflecting all nine components, this nation will raise a generation prepared to reestablish leadership in the international marketplace and reaffirm the strength of our democracy.

There are nine essential components:

1. The new system is committed to four operating assumptions:

A. All students can learn at significantly higher levels. We must share this belief if we hope to achieve much higher levels of performance from all students, including those with whom we have historically failed. We must seek to bring out the very best, not just the lowest common denominator of performance. Without this assumption, we are destined for continued failure as our expectations become self-fulfilling prophecies.

If one expects a certain number of students to fail or perform poorly, the first student who has difficulty will be identified as one of those who can never learn when measured against demanding criteria. That student will be literally or figuratively abandoned, and will be joined by more and more failed children. Soon we will have failed as many as we have today.

B. We know how to teach all students successfully. Many teachers and schools across the United States are successfully serving children who are rich and poor; children of every color; the disabled and those who are not; those who have been raised to speak English and those who have not. What works is a matter of knowledge, not opinion. The challenge is not to invent new ways, it is to identify the successful practices and then train all school staff in that knowledge and skill.

In affirming we know what works, we do not suggest we know all we need and want to know. We should continue to push the frontiers of knowledge about teaching and learning. The point is that we know far more than we practice about how to teach significantly more students at a much higher level. The schools' product must reflect that fact.

C. Curriculum content must lead to higher order skills, and instructional strategies must be those that work. What children learn should be commonly challenging. We must focus them on thinking, problem solving, and integration of knowledge. We should provide a rigorous curriculum to all, not a narrow, watered-down curriculum for some.

However, we should also recognize that how we teach, where and when teaching and learning occur, and who teaches, should be different for different students, classrooms and schools. The differences should be governed by what works in having each child succeed at significantly higher levels. When we fail with a single child or a class or school, we must recognize we do not yet have the proper mix of how, where, when, and who.

D. Every child must have an advocate. No one succeeds or maintains success without help. Children need to be read to and talked to, nurtured and cared for; others must guide them to a healthy lifestyle. All children need to be secure. School objectives require support beyond the schoolhouse. Each child must know that education is valued by one or more persons whose opinion the child values.

The parent is the best source of such help. Renewed and urgent attention to strengthening the family is important because a strong family will increase the ease of school success significantly. Where parental support does not exist, an advocate for the child must be found in the extended family, a youth-serving organization, a mentor, or someone from the school.

2. The new system is performance or outcome based, in contrast to our present reliance on inputs.

Too often, our school staffs are asked, "Did you do what you were told?" The right question is, "Did it work?" Trying hard is not enough. What students actually know and can do is what counts. Thus, we must define, in measurable terms, the outcomes required for achieving a high-productivity economy and for maintaining our democratic institutions.

3. Assessment strategies must be as strong and rich as the outcomes.

We need to reexamine how student performance is assessed in the United States. Tests and other assessment strategies must reflect an emphasis on higher expectations, thinking and integration of knowledge, understanding main ideas, and problem solving. We must abandon strategies that do otherwise, such as those that emphasize the ability of recall or recognition.

The ability to compare student performance at international, national, state, district and school levels is also important. But in making those compari-

sons, student performance should be tested against objective criteria, not by normed tests. Criterion-referenced testing reveals what a student actually knows or can do, while testing a student against norms simply tells us what he or she knows or can do in relationship to others.

Assessment inevitably influences what is taught. Thus, whether our strategies are performance based, or multiple choice, they must adequately measure the skills, knowledge, attitudes and abilities we expect our schools to produce in their students.

4. *Schools should receive rewards for success, assistance to improve and penalties for failure.*

When a school succeeds, rarely is the staff or school rewarded. When a school fails, rarely is the staff or school penalized. A system built on outcomes requires a system of rewards and penalties.

In measuring success, the school's performance, not that of individual teachers, should be the unit of measurement. Performance should be defined by the progress a school makes in having all its students succeed, based on a rigorous outcome standard when measured against the school's past performance. For instance, a successful school would be one in which the proportion of its successful students, including its at-risk students, is increased by a prescribed amount since the previous relevant assessment period.

There should be a range of rewards and sanctions. The challenge is to have alternatives and use them in ways that are more sensitive and less blunt, making certain that all parties understand the rewards and sanctions and the circumstances that give rise to each. The successful should be rewarded, but the unsuccessful must be helped more than punished.

5. *School-based staff have a major role in making instructional decisions.*

Who among us is willing to be held accountable for our actions if we have little control over those actions? Who among us can legitimately deny our accountability if we have the authority and means to act? School-based accountability for outcomes and school-based authority to decide how to achieve the outcomes are intertwined parts of the same proposition. Meaningful authority could include:

A. Real involvement in the selection of school staff, where the instructional staff help select the principal, the principal helps select teachers, and the principal and instructional staff help select non-certified personnel;

B. Significant budgetary control and the authority to determine curriculum, instructional practices, disciplinary measures, the school's calendar, and student and teacher assignments.

6. *Major emphasis is placed on staff development.*

Staff quality heavily influences school outcomes. An adequately prepared staff will require at least four things:

A. Pre-service teacher training programs that give greater emphasis to subject matter, field experience and effective use of technology in addition to classroom-based pedagogy;

B. Alternative certification opportunities for career changers and well-qualified non-education majors;

C. A strong staff development and training effort that includes:
   1. a significant research and development capacity to identify systematically those schools and instructional practices that work with all children and youth; and
   2. a training system of adequate depth with staff having sufficient time to participate; and

D. Selection, preparation and upgrading programs for administrators, instructional support staff and other non-teaching personnel to assure leadership and assistance that contribute to improved student achievement.

7. A high-quality pre-kindergarten program is critical, at least for all disadvantaged four-years-olds.

While it is not a silver bullet, the evidence is very strong that a quality, developmentally appropriate pre-school program for disadvantaged children can significantly reduce teen pregnancy, poor school performance, criminal arrest rates, drop-outs, incidence of student placement in special education and other negative and/or costly factors that reflect far too much student behavior today.

8. Health and other social services are sufficient to reduce significant barriers to learning.

Raising our expectations for educational performance will not produce the needed improvement unless we also reduce the barriers to learning that are represented by poor student health, criminal behavior in schools, and inadequate physical facilities. Education is work, and the conditions needed for successful effort are no less important in the learning environment than in the American workplace.

Pre-natal care, good nutrition for young mothers and children, preventive health care, and safe child care are prerequisites for children and youth to perform at the expectation level necessary for a high-productivity economy.

At the same time, students and educators cannot be expected to perform at high levels in a work environment where drugs, crime, or poorly maintained physical facilities interfere with discipline and concentration.

Providing the needed health, social and other services will require an unprecedented measure of collaboration between agencies and/or the realignment of governance responsibility for delivering the services successfully.

9. Technology is used to raise student and teacher productivity and to expand access to learning.

Technology is not a panacea. It cannot, for instance, serve as a child's advocate or give school-based staff a major role in instructional decisions. Yet technology is a critical part of a program of systemic change, for it provides the means to improve productivity and access to learning.

Several examples illustrate the point:

A. The development of skills in problem solving and critical thinking requires all students to push at their own pace beyond historical expectations. Only technology will permit the necessary breadth and, simultaneously, depth of intellectual engagement by masses of students working at different stages of development in different disciplines.

B. Many disabled students and other students at risk, who often require greater individual attention from teachers, will find access to learning through technology.

C. The need for access to, and management of, information will likely be greater in an outcome-oriented, student-based educational system, thus increasing the reliance on technology for both education and administration.

D. Technology will be needed to extend the breadth and depth of staff development and productivity at a time when staff are performing to meet higher expectations.

For additional information on The Business Roundtable's education initiative, see *The Business Roundtable Participation Guide: A Primer for Business on Education*, prepared by the National Alliance of Business, 1990, or contact The Business Roundtable, 200 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10166, telephone 212 682-6370.

The Business Roundtable

Headquarters:
200 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10166
212 682-6370

Washington office:
1615 L Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
202 872-1260